

## LETTERS

# A history of North Hill

To the editor:

This will be the first of four reports to the taxpayers of Duxbury regarding the expansion of North Hill Country Club to an 18 hole course. It is important to briefly review the history of North Hill, especially for those who have moved into town since 1977.

At a special town meeting on Oct. 16, 1972, articles 1 and 2 were passed appropriating \$920,000 for the land taking of 300-plus acres for the purpose of "a municipal golf course." The land at that time was owned by John Merry. Before the town could take any action, John Merry entered into an agreement with Liberty Square Associates to purchase and develop a planned unit development that would include a mixture of 554 housing units. The plan went forward for review by the planning board, but due to financial problems, Liberty Square Associates did not go forward with the project. At a special town meeting on June 19, 1976, Article 1 again proposed the taking of North Hill. It failed to get the 2/3 vote that was required. Voting "yes," 219; voting "no," 122.

At a special town meeting on July 23, 1977, Article 6 was passed and appropriated \$756,000 to take North Hill "for municipal purposes such as recreation, future school sites, cemetery."

At the annual town meeting on April 4, 1978, the voters confirmed and ratified Article 6 of the 1977 special town meeting but changed the wording to "recreation, including a municipal golf course."

Eleven years hence, at the annual town meeting on April 17, 1991, the voters passed Article 33 and appropriated \$20,000 "to be used with available funds for a comprehensive study of North Hill Golf Course." The additional funding was supplied by monies from the water enterprise account and the Ellison Foundation, and totaled \$37,500.

SEA Consultants, Inc., Engineers/Architects of Cambridge, Mass., and Glasstonbury, Conn., were awarded the contract and subsequently produced a com-

prehensive report titled "North Hill Golf Course Expansion Feasibility/Environmental Impact Study."

At the annual town meeting on April 25, 1992, Article 15, regarding North Hill, was postponed indefinitely. In preparation for the annual town meeting on April 24, 1993, RKG Associates, Inc., Economic, Real Estate and Planning Consultants, produced a "Summary Report: Economic Feasibility Study for a Proposed Expansion of the North Hill Golf Course" for the cost of \$4,700. Once again Article 10 of the annual town meeting was postponed indefinitely. And, finally, the annual town meeting of 1994 also postponed indefinitely the expansion project.

After much study and deliberation, the board of selectmen appointed an ad hoc committee, in late November 1994, to deal with the expansion. It was the charge of the committee to bring to town meeting, March 11, 1995, a comprehensive plan for expansion of the North Hill Golf Course.

The committee has diligently met for the past 73 days reviewing all aspects of the North Hill property and meeting with all boards, committees and commissions who had an interest in North Hill. It is our intention to present to the annual town meeting a plan that incorporates the concerns of all parties — a plan that will bring to our community an additional asset for all to enjoy, regardless of age, one that will pay for itself and utilize the highest and best use of the property. At the same time, our natural resources will be protected by accepted recognized ground-water management programs.

During the coming three weeks, we will present the facts and figures necessary for the voters to come to an objective opinion. Conservation, economics and aquifer protection are the building blocks of our plan.

Jerry Dewing, chairman

Ad hoc North Hill expansion committee  
(Dan Baker, Pat Dowd, Paul Evans, Craig Royle, Peter Butkus, Gordon Cushing, Joe Grady, and Walter Tonaszuck)

## LETTERS

# More golf could help wildlife

To the editor:

The ad hoc North Hill expansion committee was directed by the selectmen to review the North Hill golf course nine hole expansion from as many points of view as possible, keeping in mind the original intent as stated in the town meeting article for the purchase of the property. They were to study how it could be developed in such a way that it will serve the desires of the maximum number of Duxbury residents. The following is their opinion from the conservationists' point of view.

The area being considered for expansion will undergo a change in configuration and will enhance the desirability for some types of wildlife. On walks through the site a dense hard and soft wood forest is observed, with very low density underbrush, if any. Wildlife need protective cover and, therefore, it is unlikely that much of the upland area contains an abundance of wildlife. Some species, such as squirrels and rabbits, may be displaced when the new golf course is developed, but others will benefit. Geese will be attracted to the open grassed areas and rabbits will be attracted to the rough areas abutting the fairways due to the growth of clovers and taller grasses. More than 70 percent of golf course acreage is rough and nonplay area. This area includes turf grasses, trees and water features. This integrated landscape can support a diverse wildlife population. With the construction of fairways and rough, the sun will be able to penetrate to the forest floor, where the course meets the woods, causing a greater density of underbrush to grow, thus making formerly undesirable areas now desirable for small animals and birds. The areas near the wetlands are another matter. These areas have dense underbrush and are good habitat for birds and other wildlife.

The present plan is much more "conservation friendly", than previous ones brought before the voters. The site consists of 250 plus acres, but only 90 plus acres will be utilized in the North Hill expansion. The residual 160 plus acres will remain open to the public as it always has been in the past. In an effort to cooperate, and because the ad hoc committee concurs with the open space committee, it is recommended that the selectmen empower the conservation commission to manage approximately 90 acres situated as a buffer between the North Hill marsh (Audubon land) and the expanded golf course. This area contains the most environmentally sensitive acreage. In addition, the plan creates 100 foot buffers for the walking trails, including the Green Harbor Path.

If this project were being presented by a private developer, such as occurred in 1974-1975, 554 approved living units, we would not be able to exercise the level of control we have over this project. This will remain Duxbury's land and the citizens of Duxbury will determine how it will be managed. Before any activity can take place on the property, the proposed plans and construction must be reviewed in accordance with our protective bylaw.

Commentaries regarding economic and aquifer protection will be forthcoming.

Jerry Dewing  
Duxbury

# But would damage water supply

To the editor:

The North Hill expansion committee's (NHEC) presentation to the finance committee raises some serious concerns. The NHEC failed to address the competition of neighboring existing and planned golf courses and, most importantly, the impact of the town's water supply.

The existing and proposed courses are with an aquifer protection district, the primary zone of contribution for the Tremont, Partridge, Evergreen, Mayflower, Depot, Damon, Millbrook and Teakettle well fields. The aquifer, which is underlying the North Hill area, is the town's primary source of water. Any stresses, such as drought, pumpage, and/or contamination will reverberate throughout the entire system. The aquifer is relatively narrow in thickness, only a few feet below land surface and only 12 to 20 feet below upland areas. The sandy soil allows for rapid recharge, however, they also allow for easier penetration of contaminants, such as pesticides, herbicides and nitrates.

The SEA study (1992) reports nitrate concentrations of 3.5 parts per million in the groundwater below the existing nine holes (the maximum allowable limit is 10 parts per million). Given that the Depot Station wells have less than one part per million, this raises concern. The application of fertilizer-nitrate will be doubled with the expansion of the course, thereby increasing the risk of slugs of nitrate moving through the aquifer.

The expansion plan includes four monitoring wells to assess the infiltration of chemicals to the groundwater. First of all, if chemicals show up in the test wells, then it's too late; they have already entered the groundwater. Also, to state the cost of this monitoring is premature and misleading; Horsley and Witten have not reviewed the proposed site, submitted a comprehensive proposal, or gone through the required bidding process.

The new golf course plan calls for the lining of the kettle holes, which were created by retreating glaciers, and using them as part of the irrigation system. These artificial ponds will also serve as catchment basins for some of the runoff of water and any chemical substances that have been applied to the turf. I question the water quality of these basins if they attract wildlife. In addition, the capture of these waters will reduce the amount of water recharged to our aquifer. The Department of Environmental Protection told me that much of what is applied to golf courses is

similar to what homeowners can apply to their lawns. However, the acute toxicity of some golf course chemicals disallows homeowner use and only a licensed agronomist can handle them. In essence, we are entrusting the safety of our water to a single person and the town can be held liable for tort damages.

The present nine holes are reportedly drawing 50,000 gallons per day directly from the North Hill marsh pond. The NHEC projects that the new course will consume less than 100,000 gallons per day, thus avoiding the need for a Department of Environmental Protection water withdrawal permit. Usage of less than 100,000 gallons per day (or roughly 3 million gallons per month for an 18 hole course) appears to be grossly underestimated. In 1993, Marshfield Country Club withdrew an average of 4.8 million gallons per month during the months of June, July and August. Pembroke Country Club withdrew an average of 6.9 million gallons per month over that same time period. The committee's projected daily water usage is equivalent to the daily consumption of water in nearly 357 households. However, DEP informed me that Duxbury as a whole is consuming almost twice the state average. In addition, we have exceeded our DEP withdrawal permit by 300,000 gallons per day for the past four years.

We have open space, conservation land, the bay, the beach, and historical homes. As these assets become scarce our property values increase. The value of our water cannot be overstated, it is a precious and finite resource. Any misuse can and will result in a direct and costly impact on your property values and your taxes. Based on the NHEC projections, the revenue that will be generated by the expanded course pales relative to the potential liability. We should not use our homes as collateral in this venture.

Rachel Carson included in *Silent Spring* a poignant quote by E.B. White: "I am pessimistic about the human race because it is too ingenious for its own good. Our approach to nature is to beat it into submission. We would stand a better chance of survival if we accommodated ourselves to this planet and viewed it appreciatively instead of skeptically and dictatorially."

We encourage you to vote no on the expansion of the North Hill Golf Course.

Holly and Jim Morris  
Duxbury